MORTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

Kyle L. Kirchmeier, Sheriff

News Release
For Immediate Release
November 15, 2016
Contact: Morton County PIO 701- 426-1587 or 701-595-3596

350 Protesters Block BNSF Railroad Resulting in Arrests

Mandan, N.D. – Local law enforcement made 26 arrests in conjunction with the "No DAPL National Day of Action" in which anti-pipeline protestors congregated at various locations in Burleigh and Morton County.

At approximately 10:00 am today, law enforcement responded to protest activity along Highway 10 west of Mandan where approximately 300-400 protestors had gathered to block a BNSF railroad track. Protestors had moved a pickup truck onto the tracks, slashed its tires, and placed tree limbs and other brush under the vehicle. Law enforcement report that a rope attached to the vehicle was soaked in kerosene and protestors attempted to ignite the vehicle. State troopers used an extinguisher on the rope to stop the fire. Protestors then lifted the truck off the railroad tracks onto the north side of the tracks.

Law enforcement contacted the BNSF yardmaster to halt inbound and outbound trains for about three hours.

Protesters hindered law enforcement officers making arrests which resulted in law enforcement taking greater measures through less-than-lethal force. This included law enforcement using pepper spray, sponge and bean bag rounds and a Taser deployment.

"Protesters ignored repeated orders from law enforcement to go back to their vehicles due to the unlawful natures of their protest." said Morton County Sheriff Kyle Kirchmeier. "Protesters blocked the railroad tracks which forced the BNSF railway to hold back several trains during the protest activity. Today's unlawful obstruction of interstate commerce led to numerous arrests for tampering or damaging a public service."

Law enforcement were able to remove the protesters from the BNSF track and onto I-94 Business Loop (Old Highway 10) west of Mandan. The law enforcement line moved the protesters east toward Mandan and made arrests along the way.

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In addition to felony charges of "tampering or damaging a public service" associated with BNSF, the other arrests included "obstruction of a governmental function", "criminal trespass", "disorderly conduct" and "resisting arrest". Twenty five protesters were arrested during this event.

Other activity in the area included protestors outside of the Morton County Law Enforcement Center, approximately 50 protestors at the local Corps of Engineers office, and about 100 protesters by United Tribes Technical College (UTTC). The protests near UTTC included pro-law enforcement in addition to anti-pipeline protesters.

Another arrest occurred at Turtle Hill near the protest camps for trespassing.

A small group of protestors also gathered to pray near the drill pad site east of Lake Oahe with permission from the Corps of Engineers. No arrests were made.

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